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## FACT SHEET

### Afghanistan Women's Business Federation

#### OVERVIEW

The Afghanistan Women's Business Federation (AWBF) was created by a core group of 18 women's business associations in 2004 with support from USAID and the Ministry of Commerce of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The associations founded AWBF to create an umbrella organization supporting women's entrepreneurship, as well as to serve as a capacity building network for women's business organizations. This network of associations, which includes national, provincial, and local organizations, provides Afghanistan's women entrepreneurs with the support they need to achieve success in the private sector. AWBF conducts economic development initiatives, mentors young entrepreneurs, and provides membership services in order to address the changing needs of women in business.

#### ACTIVITIES

- Training member associations and women entrepreneurs in business management, marketing, finance, and technical skills (such as food processing or handicraft design).
- Providing business counseling and mentoring services.
- Promoting trade through sponsored member attendance at local and international exhibitions.
- Developing market linkages by connecting members with national and international buyers and investors.
- Providing showroom and exhibition space for the merchandise of women-owned companies.
- Facilitating access to finance through loans and/or grants for companies of member associations.
- Advocating for economic reforms that improve the business environment for women enterprises.
- Providing access to legal consultation for member associations.

#### RESULTS

- 87 members, of which 73 are women's business associations, nine are women artisans, and five are women-owned and operated companies.
- Opened the Entrepreneurship Training Center in Kabul.
- Provided more than 1,300 training opportunities in basic and advanced entrepreneurship skills.
- Conducted 70 capacity-building workshops on entrepreneurship, leadership, and women's business association development.
- Published a value-added study of women's enterprises in the furniture, jewelry, and textile sectors.
- Held its first annual conference in February 2009 to communicate past achievements; current activities; and future objectives and strategy to members, supporting organizations, and the public. To promote the economic empowerment of Afghan women, memoranda of understanding were signed by the Afghan Ministries of Commerce and Women's Affairs, the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency, the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society. Alkozai Tea, Afghan United, and Aria Banks pledged similar cooperation in achieving AWBF's goal of supporting women entrepreneurs.
- Opened a showroom for member products in Kabul in May 2009.